

Pastoral
PAROCHIAL REFORMATION RECOMMENDED,

A
S E R M O N,

Preached on the SUNDAY next before EASTER,
APRIL the 13th, 1783,

At the PARISH CHURCH of
NAYLAND, IN SUFFOLK.

B Y
WILLIAM JONES, M.A. F.R.S.

Curate of NAYLAND, in SUFFOLK, and
Rector of PASTON, in NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

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RECOMMENDED FOR RECOMMENDATION

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STERN

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WILLIAM J. M.A. T.R.S.



Christ of the Kingdom of the Father

and of the Son of the Father

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TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF THE PARISH OF
NAYLAND.

My Dear Brethren,

THE following Discourse was well intended for the benefit and happiness of this place; and by the Desire which has been expressed of seeing it in print, I have the pleasure of knowing that, though freely worded, it has been well taken. I have already seen some good effects from it, and I trust they will remain with us. I can only repeat in few words, what the Sermon declares more at large, that I shall at all times be ready to promote your temporal and eternal Interests on all occasions both in word and deed, and that I shall always remain

Your affectionate

Brother and Servant,

for Christ's sake.

W. J.

Just published by the same Author, price Six-pence.

(at the Request of the Audience)

**THE DUTY OF RELIEVING THE POOR
AND THEIR CHILDREN.**

A Sermon,

Preached at St. PETER's, in COLCHESTER,

On SUNDAY APRIL the 27th, 1783,

For the BENEFIT of the CHARITY SCHOOL.

2. COR. ii. 16.

To the one we are the savour of Death unto Death; and to the other the savour of Life unto Life: and who is sufficient for these things?

SO strangely has the world been divided in its opinion concerning the Gospel, that the ministers of Jesus Christ, whose business it is to preach it, have always found themselves in a difficult situation; such as no man can be *sufficient* for without the gifts of fortitude and prudence and patience from the Spirit of God, to support and assist him in his office. Christianity always had and always will have its adversaries: it corrects the false opinions, and controls the licentious morals of unconverted nature; therefore nature rises up against it; and as nature is the same in all ages and in all parts of the world, time and place make but little difference in this respect. The difficulty was certainly greater to the Apostles than it is to us. The heathen Religion was then in possession of the world; and all its abominable practices had the sanction of custom and establishment; so

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that



that the opposition then carried on against the Gospel was more active and virulent, as well as more powerful, than it is now. But true Religion is still the adversary of Error and Vice as it was then; and therefore the difficulty must remain to all the Successors of the Apostles, so long as Error and Vice shall have any power and Interest upon Earth. God who gave to his ministers the knowledge of the Truth, and all good men who love the Truth, will be ready to encourage them for their works sake; but evil will be as near at hand to discourage and resist them. The Apostle having this case under his consideration, is shocked with the difficulty, and cries out, *who is sufficient for these things?* Who can endure to stand in this fearful and troublesome situation? With the Sun shining on one side of him, and a cold tempestuous wind beating against him on the other? What patience can hold out against, what constitution can long survive, such a trial? Yet such must be the trial, in some degree, of every true Preacher of God's word; and as it has been my lot to preach amongst you, I hope with some profit, I am sure with much sincerity, it will be for our common advantage to consider the difficulties to which I am exposed in common with every other minister of a Parish; that having considered them, you may

may be ready (as I have reason to think you will be) to do all in your power to lessen them. The better I shall succeed in my Duty, the greater will be your advantage; and that as well in this world as in the next.

However well disposed and tractable the people of a Parish may be, all will not be alike. Some will respect their Minister for God's sake, for the Church's sake, and for his work's sake; they will attend with pleasure to his doctrine, and his advice will sink into their ears. He found them good, and his instructions will make them better: they will profit by his admonitions, and even bear his reproofs, if such should be necessary, without being offended. But it will not be so with all: others there are who will judge differently; some from an untractableness of natural temper; some from worldly interest; some from an unhappy turn in their Education, or from a total neglect of it, under careless and ungodly parents; more from bad customs, and long established habits of vice or self-indulgence. Hence it will always happen, that if a Minister in his preaching bears hard upon any particular sin, as the course of his Duty may require, and describes the folly, misery and shame of it; every sin will find a friend in some corner of the Church who will take its
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part, and be offended with the preacher. If he speaks against drunkenness, "there," says the drinker, "he meant to reflect upon *me*:" that stroke upon covetousness, was intended for me, says another: in that remark upon the pernicious consequences of fornication, he meant to expose me, says another. Thus they bring themselves to a persuasion, that their Minister is their enemy, and means to be severe upon them; for no other reason, but because they cannot help being severe upon themselves. Hear how the Apostle states this difficulty in a few words: *am I therefore*, says he, *become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?* Suppose we see a man straying out of the road, while he is going on business of the last importance, and has no time to lose; and we call out to him to tell him he is wrong, and use all our endeavours to put him into the right way; ought that man to take us for his enemies? We should think him a strange man if he did. Is the shepherd an enemy to the straying sheep, when he would bring it back from the error of its ways in safety to the fold? But suppose that which *should be* a sheep, is a wolf, or a swine; such indeed have an interest against being brought back; and, instead of respecting their guide as a friend, will turn again and rent him. Some such there will
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be found in all places. Every minister must expect to have some amongst his flock, who are more nearly allied to the forest than the fold; who never intend to reform themselves, and do not even wish to be better than they are: even as the swine gives itself no trouble to acquire the character of the sheep. What will such do? What can they do, but endeavour, out of favour to themselves, to lessen the influence of their minister? There are several ways of doing this: of which the most common and obvious, is to impute all his zeal to an evil motive; to pride, hypocrisy, or ill nature; to any thing rather than to sincerity and charity. Another way is to take advantage of some accident or appearance, and raise reports to his disadvantage. There never did, nor ever will live that man upon the earth, whose life could be secure from misrepresentation; and Truth misrepresented answers all the purposes of defamation better than a lie, because there is some apparent foundation of reason and fact to build upon. Another artifice is that of ridicule. There is in most men, through the depravation of their nature, almost as great a propensity to laugh, as there is in monkeys to chatter; and therefore they are very easily provoked to it. Children laugh at nothing; and many with older heads upon their shoulders

shoulders laugh at that which is next to nothing: some laugh when they ought to pray; and others when they ought to cry. I could tell you of a Wit, (now gone to answer for his folly) who even ridiculed the Providence of God*, and the doctrine of future rewards and punishments in another life: Yet this is the engine which many people employ, to lessen the efficacy of the Gospel, and the influence of those that preach it. Not only the Ministers of God, but even God himself is made an object of ridicule!

Thus you see how every preacher is exposed by the nature of his office to suffer from the tongue of slander. They who hate the truth, must never be expected to love those that publish it; and of those whom they do not love they will be tempted to speak evil. Hence you will understand the propriety of that declaration of our blessed Lord, "*woe be unto you when all men speak well of You:*" for the world at large never will speak well, but of those who make all things easy, and give them no disturbance: false prophets who *speak smooth things*, and care for nothing but themselves, will be well spoken of.

It is another misfortune upon the Minister of a Parish, that with frequent use his voice and manner

* VOLTAIRE, in his *Candide*, which is a Satyr upon the belief both of a particular and a general Providence.

ner become familiar, and consequently lose something of their force and influence upon the audience. When he comes first to a place, he is gladly received and eagerly attended to; just as any other thing would be that is *new*. But when curiosity abates, as it always must do with familiarity and repetition, such as have no deeper root than this to their attachment, must grow indifferent and will fall away, perhaps, into total inattention. The public is so fond of novelty, and more in this than any nation of Europe, that they are apt to over-rate what is new, and having began with inexperience and indiscretion, they end with disappointment. Imagination, that deceitful faculty, is always at work to cheat men with vain expectations: they look for more than they can find, and thence suspect at last that they have found nothing. They expect a Preacher to be all perfection, and exempt from the errors of mortality; but preachers are exposed to the same cross accidents with other men from the vicissitudes and trials of human life, and the humours of other people, over which they have no power. They have their infirmities and their mistakes; they are exposed from without to the contempt of real enemies, and from within to the neglect and treache-

ry of pretended friends; the world from abroad may frown upon the sincerity of their labours; and at home, their foes may be those of their own household. In all things of this kind, they are not only on a level with other men, but are in farther danger of being reduced below it from envy to their office, and jealousy against their authority: *These things, saith St. Paul, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes, that ye might learn in us, not to think of men above that which is written---for I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed unto Death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and to men**. Even Christ himself, whose time was all spent in doing good, and shewing forth many mighty works, all of a saving and merciful turn, was railed at and despised as one that *had a devil and was mad*. But who were they that spoke evil of him? conceited blind guides, who had made God's word of no effect; covetous and adulterous Pharisees; worldly-minded Priests; unbelieving Sadducees; hypocrites, politicians, and profligates. In like manner, if there are any in a place who shew less regard than the rest to their Clergyman; look at such persons, and examine their lives and manners: see whether they are kind and merciful to their poor neighbours?

* 1 Cor. iv. 9.

bours? whether they make a conscience of frequenting the worship of God in the Church? Whether they are sober and temperate, abstaining from all indecency and excess? It is a common observation, that some tongues can be guilty of little slander; because the reports of men and their reflexions will have weight according to the value of their private characters. What does it signify how many ill words a man vomits out against his minister, who perhaps is seen in the street soon after vomiting up his drink? What does it signify whether *he* honours a Priest or not, who blasphemes the holy name of God in his common discourse, and is a disgrace to his profession, and a nuisance to the public? However, as there is no man who means to court another's ill-will, and who would not rather be glad to have his esteem; the disesteem which falls upon clergymen from their office, though it be only from the worst, and is totally owing to the parties themselves, is yet a loss and a trial: for the worst man has a soul, which might be saved; and a minister is bound to promote the salvation of it by forbearance and tenderness and kind advice, so long as there is any hope remaining.

Now I have represented to you some of the general difficulties and discouragements which must in all places attend a sincere Clergyman;

I shall venture to go a step farther, and set before you some of the disadvantages peculiar to myself in this place: and I trust you will hear me patiently, and without offence.

My Brethren, I am thankful that I came amongst you, and hope I shall never have any reason to repent of my choice; for hither did I come by choice and not by necessity. The world was before me, and any other place might have suited with a busy life, such as mine has always been. But when I settled here, the Parish had been long without a resident Minister, and at times had been served very irregularly, and was consequently out of order: yet I think, upon the whole, not so much as would have happened in some other places under the like circumstances: and I have imputed much of the good that was retained amongst you to the seed sown and the labour bestowed by a late learned and worthy Predecessor the Reverend Mr. JOHN WHITE, whose light is not yet gone out, and whose name ought to be had in everlasting remembrance.

The first difficulty I was under, and that a very great one, was owing to an habitual neglect of the Communion in too many of the Congregation: on which account, I laboured in the pulpit, and out of it, to produce some reformation; and not in vain; for we have many more
communicants

communicants than formerly. But alas! how often have I been distressed with visiting people in their last sickness, who had never attended the Communion in all their lives! In some few cases, they had been misguided by vain fears, and the influence of ill advice; all arising from an ignorance of the subject; but in many others, this neglect arose from the want of a godly sense of the deceitfulness of sin, and the great danger of a careless life unrepented of: and seeing too many others in the same way, they were encouraged (or rather, they encouraged themselves) to go on to their lives end in the same fatal error. It is sorrow enough to a Minister to attend a Parishioner to his Grave, and to see the dust thrown upon a person with whom he had conversed and to whom he had preached; this is sufficient of itself; but when the consideration is added, that he had neglected the terms of his salvation; that he had been often called upon in the Exhortation of the Church (a powerful address upon the subject) but never prevailed upon; that now there is no farther exhortation to be used, no opportunity in the grave; this is a greater sorrow to every considerate mind; and I wish to God I may feel less of it for the time to come.

Another evil is the prevailing practice of excessive Drinking, with all its fearful consequences;

quences; of which, as you all know, there are too many examples; and I fear the rising generation is likely to furnish more. I cannot stay now to set before you the sin and shame and danger of this vice; I have done this at other times: I have shewed you how it is attended with loss of time, of health, of substance; to the injury of a poor family; the hardening of the conscience; the quenching of God's Grace, till the Light of Religion is turned into total darkness. From the havock this sin makes in mens minds bodies and estates, too much can never be said against it: and as it is a fearful thing to be a partaker in other mens sins, when every man has too many of his own to answer for; therefore, if there be any here present, who from the deceitful calculations of worldly Interest, are tempted to encourage their neighbour to this folly and excess, and urge him on to abuse and ruin himself; I beseech them to consider what they are doing, and to hear that warning voice of the Prophet---
*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink;
 that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him
 drunken also, that thou mayst look on their nakedness*---that thou mayst see them stripped of their reason, when they are turned fools, and their *minds* are naked; and see them also stripped of their property, after they have sat swallowing liquor

quor, till there is not a penny left in their pockets. He that strips a man upon the highway, has all the sin to himself; but he that strips a man in this way, has his neighbour's sin as well as his own to answer for: and it is justly to be apprehended that the Providence of God in many instances brings ruin instead of riches, and disappointment instead of success, from all that sort of gain which arises from the corruption of other mens morals. So the Prophet tells us, that there is a cup of judgment which comes round at last, to give them their reward in kind, and make them vomit up what they have unjustly gotten. On which consideration I intreat all those whose occupation exposes them to this danger, to be aware of it, and guard against it as well as they can; with this assurance, that he who grows rich by other mens ruin takes a fire into his bosom, which may lie there smothered for a time, like embers under the ashes, but will too surely break out at last into a flame, the effects of which will be felt, when the cause is forgotten.

Another evil, and, to the great misfortune of this country, an increasing evil in many places, is that of fornication, which brings an unhappy and unpromising race of children upon a parish, who grow up half disowned and neglected, with the influence of an evil example from their
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parents, added to the influence of a corrupt uncultivated nature; and who, if they live, will perhaps bring another breed of the same sort, and so on to the end of the world; to the great corruption of the Youths of both sexes, and the impoverishing of those who live honestly, and are obliged to assist in the maintaining of such as become chargeable to others from vice and idleness. Something might be done toward the lessening of this evil, if the officers of a parish would bestir themselves, as they are all bound to do in reason and conscience, and some of them by the sacred obligation of an oath. The lower Class of people will certainly make light of this evil, if those who are above them do nothing to prevent it. A Minister according to his Duty, represents the miserable consequences of this unlawful commerce; how it is attended with loss of conscience, loss of character, the destruction of family-happiness, the forfeiting of God's blessing, the prospect of beggary, infamy, and eternal damnation. These things he may represent; but unless admonition is seconded with some activity, and some authority from the laws, it will not be of sufficient weight; because, when things are left to this, and Reformation is forwarded by nothing but admonition, it looks as if people were not in earnest.

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Another evil is the profanation of the Sabbath. We have too many examples of persons exercising their worldly business in defiance of sobriety and decency; of others absenting themselves from the Church for years together; and attending no other place of worship; as if it were the opinion of the place, that men are at liberty to live without God in the world.

Of all these Abuses which I have set before you, there is not one, for the preventing of which I am not ready to do my part: but it is the chief business of this discourse to remind you, that I can do nothing of myself, against the sense, and without the hearty concurrence of my neighbours. When the Minister of a Parish stands single in the exercise of discipline and the Work of Reformation, he can only make himself enemies, who will hate him without a cause, instead of amending themselves.

In an Age when Civil and Ecclesiastical Authority are both grown decrepit with old age and want of exercise, the defects of lawful government must be supplied by confederacies and associations of one party against another. This is a poor substitute for regular authority; but in some cases, it is the best the times allow us. Therefore they who wish to preserve order, must unite against those who wish to break it. There

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is nothing that appears odious in the application of such remedies as the Law affords, if the many unite against the few, who are then left without that countenance and defence which they borrow from the neglect of their Superiors. The Minister can do little for his Parish in this way, unless the majority are with him, and desire that he should succeed. Indeed it is universally true, that nothing can be done for those who will do nothing for themselves. It is thus in the Education of Youth, and the instruction of the ignorant; none can be taught to much purpose, but they who are desirous to learn. Even God's Grace works only with those who will work along with it: Yea and our blessed Saviour himself, when upon earth, though ever ready to do good, could do none to those who were not disposed to look for it, and ready to receive it.

I wish to see this place a pattern of regularity and sobriety, not an example of drunkenness, profaneness and ill-manners. If ever I hear it spoken of under this latter character, I am hurt and grieved, as if I had heard some evil report against myself or my own family. And does it not concern You, my brethren, to feel as much for yourselves as I feel for you? Religion Reason, and good Policy, the Authority of God and the common sense of man, call upon you to
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do what you can against the spreading evil of bad examples and corrupt communications. Vice is an expensive thing to all that practice it, and to all that connive at it. A wicked Parish will ever be an idle Parish; and an idle Parish (as men are to live by their industry) must be a poor Parish; and the more the poor increase in any place, the fewer shoulders are left to bear the Burthen; and then some who do not deserve it, and have no share in the general corruption, are broken down with the weight of it.

I am sometimes very uneasy when I revolve these things in my mind: yet under all these difficulties, I have two considerations on which to repose myself. I have lived long enough in the world to know, that however sincerely a man may wish to have every body do what is right, he must be content to see much evil which he cannot prevent, and to hear many falsehoods which he can never hope to silence. If it is his desire to resist prevailing evils, they will not be imputed to him though he should not succeed: let those look to it, who might forward his good intentions and do not. The other consideration with which I comfort myself is this, and a very common one it is; that if we cannot do as much as we would, we must still be willing to do as much as we can.

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If some advantages are denied to us, others will always be left to us. I can instruct the children of my Parish; I can visit the sick, and comfort those who have no comforter but God and myself; I can help the Poor in some of their occasional distresses; and (with God's help) I can preach the Gospel freely; and if my labours should not prosper here so much as might be wished, and my Evening Lectures should not be so well attended as when novelty recommended them; I must then consider my Country as my Parish, if it will give me leave; I must hope, that what I speak here will be better attended to somewhere else, and be doing some good, when I can speak no longer. In the mean time I shall not be discouraged: this Sermon may do more good than I can yet foresee, and may stir up some others to be like-minded with myself. God send it may do so; the advantage will not be to me, but to us all: and as the time is approaching when some yearly regulations are to take place, I trust you will all remember what has now been said to you. I have only to tell you farther, that the time is short; and that all worldly interests and worldly considerations will soon be of no value to any of us: but that the zeal we exercise for the honour of God, and the benefit of the place in which we live, will follow

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low us into the grave, and rise with us again to
judgement; when *they that have done good shall*
go into life everlasting.

F I N I S.

